Shrinathji’s Charan Chinha

If we look closely at Shrinathji’s Charan Chinha, the 16 symbols embedded on the soles of Shrinathji’s feet, we get several beautiful divine insights.

The Nine Chinha on Shrinathji’s right Charan

Starting from the heel, if we move in the anticlockwise direction, we can see a fully bloomed lotus, two goads, a swastika facing west, a food grain, a flower with 8 petals, a bolt of lightning, a six-pointed star with a small pot in it, a flag and a line between Shrinathji’s right toe and heel. We can see a similar line on his left sole too.

The Six Chinha on Shrinathji’s left Charan

Starting from the heel, if we move in the clockwise direction, we find a fish with its snout facing upwards, a big fruit, a coil spiralling in the anticlockwise direction, a crescent, a hoof mark, a triangle facing upwards and an arrow strung in a bow.

Significance of the Chinha on Shrinathji’s right Charan

The right side represents the male, the mind and the spiritual nature of man.

Padma

The Padma, a fully bloomed lotus, represents Lakshmi, Vishnu’s consort. A male is incomplete without a female. The mind needs the heart to reach a balanced state. The spiritual nature of man can be sustained only if he is satiated materialistically.

The Padma also signifies detachment. Yet only if we are aware of our cultural/mental/emotional attachments can we detach ourselves from them.

Ankusha

Ankushas are small tools to goad elephants forward. The double whammies that we experience in the material world are our Ankushas. They goad us to pursue God with complete faith.

Sauwastika

The Sauvastika is a Swastik whose arms point in the counter-clockwise direction. It symbolizes the night, the tantric aspects of Kali and Karma.

Kali, the fearsome Adi Shakti stands untamed and naked on her consort Shiva. But Shakti's fury does not perturb Shiva. It is Shiva's detachment that calms her. Kali is the feminine form of time, 'Kala', Shiva. Mahakali is MahaMaya too.

Time transforms Kali to Krishna and Shiva to Radha. Like Kali, Krishna's divine love too is beyond age, gender, caste, creed, colour, himsa or ahimsa – anything and everything. Like MahaMaya Krishna too shatters our illusions and reveals the stark truth to us. Yet we do have to pay for our Karma….

Jav

'Jav', a Sanskrit word for barley, is a food grain. It grows quickly. Like Jav, we can now make quick spiritual progress because we are conscious of the prejudices that lurk in our hearts and minds.

Rasa Mandal

The flower with eight petals and a big yellow circle at the centre represents the Rasa Mandal. The petals of this flower are the gopis and the centre is Krishna.

The gopis' love for Krishna is unconditional and pure. They have no barriers in their hearts or minds. So they can create and live in a divine realm of their own – with their own Krishnas and experience 'Ananda'(bliss).....

Vajra

The Vajra, the thunderbolt is a weapon wielded by Indra, the god of devas. It is made out of the adamantine bones of Maharishi Dadhichi, is as hard as a diamond and represents dharma, firmness of spirit and spiritual power.

The gopis get the firmness of spirit to walk on the path of dharma in the real world because they feel spiritually empowered internally after participating in the MahaRaas with Krishna. That is the kind of love we should try to nurture.

The Shatkona

The triangle pointing upwards represents Shiva. The triangle pointing downwards represents Shakti. Shiva and Shakti merge to form the Shatkona. The Kalash, a pot filled with water symbolises Amrit, the nectar of immortality and is placed at the centre of this Shatkona.

Shiva cannot exist without Shakti. The heart cannot exist without the mind. The spiritual world must be in harmony with

the material world. The hermit must be a householder too. Only if there is complete harmony in our inner and outer worlds at all times can we sip on Amrit, the nectar of immortality.

Urdhva Rekha

The Urdhva Rekha is a long straight line found in the ‘Charan Chinha’ of all avatars of Vishnu. It represents wealth, auspiciousness and courage.

Destiny prevails. Always. We may work consciously to strike this balance in our lives. But we do have to settle our Karmic accounts. Spiritual awareness gives us the courage to walk on the path of Dharma. So we now use our free will to minimize our Karmic baggage and aspire for Moksha.

Dhwaja

We strive for inner victory now – victory over the self- over our mind and heart – so that the soul can reign supreme at all times. That is what the Dhwaja, the flag symbolizes.

Significance of the Chinha on Shrinathji’s left Charan

The left side represents the female, the heart and the material nature of women.

Matsya

The fish looking upwards represents our restless heart and mind. Vishnu too sleeps on Sesha, a snake that keeps coiling and uncoiling itself. Sesha rests on Kshirasagara, an ocean that is constantly moving. In the Matsya avatar only when the fish

keeps growing in size rapidly does Satyavarta realize that the fish is Vishnu.

Vishnu saves Satyavarta, the Saptarishis, the Vedas and all other creations from the great deluge. He comes at the appointed time with a horn on his head and asks Satyavarta to steady his boat using Sesha, Time, as his rope.

We may have complete faith in Vishnu. We may restlessly yearn for his grace. But he will come to our aid only at the right time.

Jambu

The Jambu tree stands on Jambudvipa on mount Mahameru. The branches of this tree reach heaven. The huge ripe fruits break open when they fall. The juice oozing out of this fruit flows into river Jambu. When the juice of the Jambu fruit are weathered by water, air and sun it turns into Jambunada, a superior kind of gold.

Jambvadani, the goddess who lives on the banks of this river relishes the Jambu fruit and loves to adorn herself with the Jambunada. Jambvadani is easy to please and blesses her devotees with health, wealth and long life.

Slowly it dawns on us that instead of pursuing God, we can connect to him- every day- by revelling in the various interconnected aspects of Nature too.

Akash

The spiral which spins to infinity in the anticlockwise direction is Akash, ether, space.

According to the Puranas, the world is divided into seven concentric island continents. Each continent is surrounded by an ocean. The size of each ocean keeps doubling as we move outwards. The oceans are made of saltwater, sugarcane juice, wine, ghee (clarified butter), yoghurt, milk and finally water. The mountain range Lok- Aloka, world – no world, stretches across the sea of water after which the world merges into a dark void. Jambudvipa stands at the centre of it all.

God may stretch to infinity and beyond. But we can find him right now too – even as we satiate our ever-increasing material hungers with the abundance that Nature blesses us with.

The Crescent

The crescent moon symbolises the ever-changing nature of life. Shiva adorns himself with a crescent because he remains unaffected by the rigours of time.

We live in a material world. Pain and pleasure is a part of it. But like the ever-changing shape of the moon, everything is transient and in perfect harmony with the larger scheme of things. Like Shiva we just need to detach ourselves from it all – pain – pleasure – and everything in between - to find the Shakti within us.

Trikona

The upward-pointing triangle is stable and represents the male and the mind. We often get carried away by our materialistic

pursuits. At such times the spiritual nature of males stabilizes and anchors the materialistic nature of females.

Gopadam

The crevice in the hoof prints of cows (Gopadam) can hold very little water in it. Overcoming the challenges of our material world is as easy as crossing over the hoof prints of cows – if we are aware of a higher power.

Akrura, Krishna's maternal uncle is an enlightened soul. When he sees the Gopadam and the Charan Chinha of Krishna on the sand in Vrindavan, he starts rolling over them because he knows he can ascend to Goloka, the realm of Krishna by doing so.

Dhanush Baan

The Dhanush Baan is the bow and arrow arrangement. The arrow is placed into the bow. The bowstring is taut. And the entire arrangement faces inwards.

Instead of trying to control others it's best to control ourselves. Always. And that is exactly what the Dhwaja symbolizes too.

We can interpret Shrinathji's Charan Chinha in myriad different ways. That is perfectly fine. Even by Him. As long as we connect to God, any God or our God in some way, the path or the journey that we choose to take will never matter. Even to Him.